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Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement:

Expanding Roles for the US Military

Nineteen eighty-nine marked the end of the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union. No longer are confrontations based on ideological differences. The threat of massive nuclear war has all but disappeared. The "old" world order has been replaced by disorder and chaos inflamed by religious, ethnic, and cultural differences. The result has been widespread genocide, mass starvation, civil war, and in some cases the breakup of national sovereignty. As a result, the US armed forces have become increasingly involved in non traditional military roles.

Less Aspin recently stated, "Given the experience of crises in Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti, there is considerable debate over whether the United States, in the frame work of the United Nations and other international organizations, should undertake peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions...Nor is there a consensus on the stake Americans have in those conflicts and the price they should bear in resolving them.¹ Employment of US military forces in non-traditional roles has set off heated debates within the military and civilian leadership. Centered

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within the debate is the impact to readiness on US military forces and the fiscal constraints affecting domestic conditions. Finally, the American public is asking the question, "What degree should the US be involved in world affairs?"

Our nation has produced the most capable armed forces in the world. It is essentially equipped and organized to conduct two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts (MRC). Its mission is to fight and win our nation's wars. However, when the military is tasked to conduct these non-traditional operations, its successes are often tarnished by mission creep, inadequate mission planning, and limited training.

In 1991 General Powell stated "Peacekeeping and humanitarian operations are a given."² Non-traditional roles will challenge the US forces in the post Cold War era. This paper will argue that the US armed forces should expand its involvement in UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. It will examine the key differences between the two and their interlocking relationships and limitations. Finally, it will develop a framework that will drive our strategy of involvement in these operations. These recommendations are critical to shaping US Military Strategy and military force structure in a post containment world.

Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.³

It is absolutely critical for the nation employing their armed forces to understand the type of operation they are conducting.

Peacekeeping: Peacekeeping actions are generally non-combatant military operations to monitor an existing agreement, undertaken with the consent of all major belligerent parties, and conducted under Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter.⁴ The above definition establishes the criteria before US forces are employed into a peacekeeping operation. There are three: First, there must be consent; second, the forces must be impartial; and thirdly, the forces should be lightly armed for self-protection.

Peacekeeping operations do not violate the national sovereignty of the nation they are entering. Because both parties want peace, the forces are invited in not to make peace but to keep peace. They do this by providing a buffer between the belligerent parties. It is up to the international community to resolve the differences between the parties, not the military. Impartiality is essential during this process. The belligerent parties cannot have the impression that the peacekeeping force is taking sides. The existence of peace must remain. Since the force is invited into the country to keep peace, the use of force should only be used for self protection. Once any of the above criteria breaks down, the operation should be terminated and US forces removed or the operation escalates to peace enforcement. The Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) supporting the peace on the Sinai Peninsula is an example of successful peacekeeping operation supporting the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty.

The MFO is responsible for monitoring and verifying the security arrangements of the peace treaty. Both Egypt and Israel agreed to the force and provided the funding to continue its operation.⁵ Since 1981, there has not been one incident that has increased tensions between the two countries and the peacekeeping force. The peacekeeping forces have created a clear buffer between the two parties. However, there are limitations. If not accounted for, these limitations may lead to failed policy and escalation.

Since the forces are lightly armed, a determined party can defy the employed force. Such was the case in Somalia. The mission evolved from humanitarian assistance, to peacekeeping, to peace enforcement. The Americans were no longer viewed as neutral which ended in the loss of 18 American soldiers. The peacekeepers task became impossible. One final limitation must be mentioned. The use of armed forces may keep the warring parties from conflict, but armed forces cannot eliminate the causes for conflict. The international community must get to the underlying political causes.

Peace Enforcement: Peace enforcement is the employment of military forces to create a cease-fire between warring parties which may be opposed by one or more of the parties.⁶

The decision to send armed forces on a peace enforcement mission is decidedly different from peacekeeping. The requirement is an escalation of capabilities. The forces must be heavily armed and must be prepared to conduct forcible offensive

operations. They must be prepared to conduct operations short of war to the coercive threat of using it. Finally, peace enforcement will be much more costly in human and equipment resources. General Powell eloquently stated, "The use of force should be restricted to occasions where it can do some good and where the good will outweigh the loss of lives and other costs that will surely ensure."⁷ Desert Shield/Storm and Bosnian crises are two very different examples of peace enforcement authorized by the UN.

Desert Storm restored the borders of Kuwait reenforcing the centuries' old Westphalian Policy. It was a straight forward operation enforcing international law and the rights of the Kuwait citizens. Bosnia has proved to be considerably more complicated.

Bosnia poses many limitations involved in peace enforcement today. The first is the issue of state sovereignty. Boutros-Ghali is rightly concerned about the rights of the opposed. He stated, "The centuries old doctrine of absolute and exclusive sovereignty no longer stands."⁸ Operation Provide Hope in Somalia authorized by the UN enforce actions taken by the US in Operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch. In all of these cases the UN and US stated the responsible governments were not capable of handling the internal affairs of these regions within their country; decidedly anti-Westphalian. Currently, Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia are involved in an ethnic/religious conflict and ignoring the efforts of peacekeepers. All three countries

are inflecting human rights violations upon each other. The Bosnian Muslims have experienced the worst of the atrocities. So far, the UN has not sent peace enforcers. This leads to the second limitation.

In Bosnia any peace enforcement would face the real possibility all the combatants may attack the peace enforcers as well as themselves. Visions of a second Vietnam draw a close parallel which the American public would not tolerate.

Finally, any peace enforcement action in Bosnia would not solve the underlying political problems. This must be accomplished by the international community. In the case of Bosnia, General Powell's above statement applies to not yet getting directly involved in Bosnia.

Strategic Framework for Involvement

The US leadership continues to struggle with what role the military should play in supporting UN efforts in peacekeeping and peace enforcement. There is no clear articulate policy tying our political objectives with military objectives.

First, the US must define its national interests in broad terms encompassing the spread of democracy and the protection of human rights. Former Secretary of Defense Les Aspin stated:

These regional conflicts, while not posing direct threats to vital US interests, may nonetheless jeopardize important American interests in regional security and in democracy and human rights. The cumulative impact of unchecked conflict and its ensuing human and economic costs will render more elusive the Administration's goal of enlarging the sphere of democratic, free market states.'

It is clear that a world in disorder will have long term effects on US national interest. For example, the problems in Central Africa may not have a direct impact on our interests today. However, if we chose to ignore this region, we may be faced with environmental and health problems in the future that will directly impact our interests.

As a result, the US policy makers must make a long term assessment on future potential impact. If the analyses supports involvement, the US should support the UN with the required forces. One must note, that the above interests must support the risk involved. The President has the moral and legal (War Powers Act) obligation to consult the Congress and the American public. History has shown that the involvement of American forces without strong support will doom the policy to failure or at least unbearable criticism.

If the risks are too great and do not support our nation's interests the US through the UN should engage the regional nations to become involved. At the very least, the US should provide the diplomatic, technical, and organizational skills; if required. The US should ask the question, "What can I bring to the table that these regional nations cannot in helping the UN resolve the problem. The operation in Rwanda is a good example.

The US provided the airlift infrastructure and water purification equipment. The US did not provide peace enforcement-peacekeeping military forces. That was accomplished by other nations. Time will only provide the answer to the UN's

ability to solve the political problems in that region.

Secondly, clear political objectives must be articulated prior to employing US armed forces. Political objectives will allow the military to formulate their military objectives with a clear end-state. Several planning factors will emerge. First, the military will be able to determine if the objectives are attainable. Second, assuming the objectives are attainable using the military, the military will define what type of force is best suited for the operation (task organization). Third, once the force is identified, required training may be accomplished revolving around developed rules of engagement. This training allows the best suited force to be employed into the region. Most important, clear objectives will prevent the imprecise use of the military. It is imperative that the operation not escalate thus making the conflict worse.

Thirdly, the administration should generate popular support of the operation prior to deployment. Whenever US resources are employed, manpower and equipment, there is a risk; the possible loss of lives and the real fiscal costs of conducting the operation. The administration must convey the political objectives and the risks involved to the American people. If support is not generated by Congress, the policy must be amended to gather support or the support to the UN must be abandoned. Garnering the support of the people (will) becomes increasingly difficult, but increasing important, in operations other than war, due to the limited objectives and the potential for

escalation.

Fourth, operations other than war must be conducted under the authority of the United Nations whether unilaterally or multilaterally. The UN will provide the necessary legitimacy to the operation. However, the US must understand their goals and objectives will be subject to coalition scrutiny. The US must remain sensitive to these differences in spite of the potential problems that may arise. The US brings one instrument no other nation can; it brings the status of a superpower. Colonel Argersinger rightly stated, "When the political, economic, and military power of the United States is committed, the significance of the issue or region is enhanced; all of the nations of the world will react, whether positively or negatively to US involvement."¹⁰

Fifth, the US military must continue to retain the capability to support its two MRC policy. For the foreseeable future traditional war will remain a potential threat. The US cannot ignore this reality with the changing nature of war encompassing the world today. The current force structure and organization is adequate to accomplish both the traditional and non traditional missions. General Downing, Commander US Special Operations Command stated,

While combat apparitions remain important, the future Spectrum of Conflict will emphasize peacetime engagement. The focus will be on maintaining order, separating clashing groups, preventative and active peacekeeping....The US Army Special Operations Command is uniquely qualified for these missions.¹¹

USASOC would form the nucleus for any large deployment since they

are uniquely trained. They are capable of integrating with the combat forces to enhance their readiness in these operations.

The US must remain consistent with the above recommendations to avoid over committing itself to UN operations. These policies will enhance its position in the international and domestic systems and provide legitimacy to the operation.

Two important issues remain unsolved but requires addressing. The readiness and funding issues effecting the combat force structure has not been resolved and is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the combat support units do receive "real" experience that can only enhance their readiness. If Congress is to allow these operations, than they must provide the required funding. The trade-off will directly effect the future modernization of the armed forces if the military pays out of their accounts.

Conclusion

No other nation in the world has the resources available to aid the UN as does the US. It has the best trained and equipped armed force with the airlift and sea lift to project it to any region of the world.

The post Cold War remains in a state of transition. The US sees no visible threat to our vital national interests in spite of the increasing number of conflicts caused by ethnic, religious, and social unrest. The American public is demanding the Clinton Administration to turn inward and focus on US domestic problems. But, it would be a mistake to ignore the

problems now facing the United Nations. The US must remain engaged with the UN in peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. With a firm understanding of the non-traditional roles, a strong and consistent policy backed by a realistic strategy, the US can maintain the leadership position in the world without over committing itself. General John Galvin sums the future of war,

The military must be ready for both traditional and non-traditional roles. To guarantee national security and foster a peaceful and prosperous world in which to conduct trade and commerce, these roles can be expected to play a large part in collective action. This does not abrogate US leadership through collective action. In fact, it strengthens the binding that the US has with other nations.¹²

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